

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 01168 161305Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4918
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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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JERUSALEM FOR USDEL SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, EG, IS, US

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS ON DEPARTMENT'S GULF OF SUEZ
STATEMENT AND AMOCO-ISRAELI PATROL BOAT INCIDENT

1. SUMMARY: ISRAELI NEWSPAPERS OF FEBRUARY 16 GIVE
PROMINENT PLAY TO THE ISRAELI PROTEST ABOUT DEPARTMENT'S
STATEMENT ON GULF OF SUEZ OIL DRILLING BY ISRAELIS.
MEANWHILE, THE LATEST INCIDENT BETWEEN ISRAELI NAVY BOATS
AND AN AMOCO DRILLING RIG IN THE GULF OF SUEZ IS ALSO
REPORTED. END SUMMARY.

2. JERUSALEM POST ARTICLE DATELINED WASHINGTON
STATES INTER ALIA THAT:

QUOTE

3. ISRAEL HAS COMPLAINED TO THE US OVER THE STATE
DEPARTMENT'S SHARP REBUKE OF ISRAEL'S OIL EXPLORATION
IN THE SINAI AND GULF OF SUEZ.

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4. EMBASSY MINISTER HANON BAR-ON, FILLING IN FOR
AMBASSADOR SIMCHA DINITIZ, CURRENTLY IN JERUSALEM FOR
SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS VANCE'S VISIT, CONVEYED ISRAEL'S
'ASTONISHMENT' OVER THE TIMING AND CONTENTS OF THE
STATEMENT, RELEASED BY ACTING STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN
FREDERICK BROWN A FEW HOURS BEFORE VANCE LEFT

WASHINGTON FOR ISRAEL.

5. ACCORDING TO INFORMED SOURCES HERE, BAR-ON, ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM JERUSALEM, SAID THAT THE REBUKE WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE ATMOSPHERE IN US-ISRAEL RELATIONS FOR VANCE'S MEETING IN ISRAEL. END QUOTE

6. DAVAR (BARNEA) COMMENTING ON SAME LINES ADDS:
QUOTE

7...ISRAEL CLARIFIED IN ITS COMPLAINT THAT THE OIL FIELDS IT OCCUPIED IN ABU RODEIS DID NOT PREVENT IT FROM RETURNING THEM WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT, AND THAT OIL DISCOVERY WOULD NOT HAMPER THE ATTAINMENT OF AN ACCORD ALSO IN THE FUTURE.

8. BAR-ON CLAIMED ALSO THAT ISRAEL DISPUTED THE US LEGAL CONTENTION WHICH ASSERTS THAT ISRAEL'S STATUS AS A CONQUERING FORCE IN THE AREA DOES NOT PERMIT IT TO SEARCH THERE FOR NATURAL RESOURCES. ISRAEL EXPRESSED ASTONISHMENT THAT THE ISSUE OF GULF OF SUEZ DRILLING, WHICH FOR SOMETIME WAS THE SUBJECT OF DISCREET CONTACTS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE US, WAS RAISED IN SUCH A BLUNT MANNER BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN. END QUOTE

9. HAARETZ (MARGALIT) DESCRIBES INCIDENT BETWEEN AN ISRAELI PATROL BOAT AND AMOCO DRILLERS IN GULF OF SUEZ AS FOLLOWS:

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10. ON THE EVE OF CYRUS VANCE'S DEPARTURE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, A NEW INCIDENT OCCURRED IN THE GULF OF SUEZ BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND AMOCO COMPANY DRILLERS.

11. THE AMERICAN-EGYPTIAN DRILLERS HAVE CROSSED THE MEDIAN LINE, WHICH WAS THE ISSUE OF FRICTION IN THE EARLIER DISPUTE AND WERE EXPELLED BY THE ISRAELIS. BOTH SIDES TRIED NOT TO ACCENTUATE THE INCIDENT BEFORE VANCE'S TRIP, AND ONE OF THEM EVEN CLAIMED THAT IT WAS NOT AWARE OF THE INCIDENT.

12. THE AMERICANS EMPHASIZED THAT, UNLIKE THE PREVIOUS DISPUTE, NO SHOTS WERE FIRED AT AMERICAN PROPERTY. SPECIAL ATTENTION IS ATTACHED TO THIS INCIDENT IN THE LIGHT OF STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S BRIEFING THAT DAY CONDEMNING ISRAELI OIL DRILLINGS AS AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE, A MATTER WHICH AROUSED ISRAELI DIPLOMATIC REACTION.

END QUOTE

13. MAARIVE (YAACOV EREZ, MILITARY CORRESPONDENT) ADDS:
QUOTE

14. AN AMERICAN DRILLING BARGE OF AMOCO COMPANY
PENETRATED A FEW DAYS AGO TO ISRAELI-CONTROLLED WATERS
AT GULF OF SUEZ AND LEFT ONLY AFTER A NAVY BOAT
INSTRUCTED IT TO DO SO.

15. RELIABLE ISRAELI SOURCES SAID THIS MORNING THAT THE
PENETRATION OF THE AMERICAN BARGE WAS NOT DEEP, AND THAT
THERE WAS NO INCIDENT WHEN THE NAVY BOAT SIGNALLED AMOCO
TO LEAVE THE AREA.

16. IT IS NOT CLEAR YET WHETHER THE PENETRATION OF THE
AMERICAN DRILLING BARGE WAS AN ATTEMPT TO EXAMINE
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ISRAELI ALERTNESS OR A NAVIGATION ERROR. END QUOTE
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